



News from the City of Greenville

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August 11, 2003

City Fire Department Orders Evacuation Moves to Stabilize Buildings on South Main Street



Structural engineers document rotted ceiling and collapsed beams making Polycraft Building dangerous, jeopardizing safety of adjoining buildings

Order to Evacuate In the interest of public safety, acting on the advice of registered professional engineers, on Friday August 1, the City of Greenville Fire Department ordered the immediate evacuation of the Mitchell and Surratt buildings located at 520-540 South Main Street. The buildings have been a safety concern for some-time, but the worsening condition of the buildings that lead to the emergency situation may have been due to several factors: 1) Heavy rains since spring have accelerated structural deterioration of the Polycraft Building, including rotting beams, floors, walls and roof that have made the building structurally unstable, and a safety hazard to adjoining properties; 2) A history of building code enforcement delays due to still unresolved disputes between the property owners who share a common wall, but do not share a common understanding about who actually owns the wall and should either fix it up or tear it down.



An aerial view of the Polycraft Building showing a collapsing roof. At top, the South Main buildings that share the unstable wall.

Events leading to the decision On July 24, Mark Peters, a certified structural engineer hired by the Hughes to develop a demolition plan for the Polycraft building, observed that the shared wall (especially behind the Mitchell building) had deteriorated to the point of structural jeopardy. On July 25, Mr. Peters sent a letter to Mr. Mitchell explaining the unsafe condition, and he copied the Fire Chief. Over the next week the Fire and Building Code officials conducted a series of their own inspections. In reviewing photographs to determine changes over recent months they noted significant structural deterioration, including the complete failure of structural beams. They also sought written clarification from



Structural engineers and Fire Marshall say water damage and falling retaining beams that once supported the wall will cause the shared wall to collapse taking neighboring structures with it. The exact time or direction of the collapse is unpredictable.



Fallen and split beams undermine support of the shared wall. Light streams into the building through large gaps in the roof.

Mark Peters regarding specific details of his findings. On Friday afternoon, August 1, the City Code Officials received a letter from Mr. Peters, stating that the Polycraft Building was in imminent danger of collapse, which could result in the collapse of the wall that is shared by the buildings on South Main.

Despite the obviously awkward timing and circumstances, the Fire Officials made the tough call to notify all property owners, tenants, and the public at large so the occupied buildings could be vacated immediately to ensure the safety of all.

Immediate move to stabilize buildings

On Saturday, August 2, the City retained an independent certified structural engineer, Tad Boland, to assess the condition of the buildings and make a recommendation on how to stabilize the Mitchell and Sarratt buildings during demolition of the Polycraft Building. Engineers, Inspectors and Fire Officials worked throughout the weekend to monitor changes and implications for additional action.

On Monday, August 4, the City ordered the Hughes to have their structural engineer contact Mr. Boland within 48 hours and instructed the Hughes that demolition or repair would have to be expedited. Mr. Mitchell and Mrs. Sarratt were also notified of the action being taken with The Hughes and that Mr. Boland had been engaged. Mitchell and Surratt were also asked to contact Mr. Boland as soon as possible to discuss next steps toward stabilizing their buildings.

Mr. Boland has said that plans for demolition will need to include provisions for stabilization under rapidly deteriorating conditions and that the work will be difficult and dangerous.

The City will continue to work on a daily basis to monitor and assess changing conditions and will communicate on a regular basis to affected parties and the public at large as appropriate. The City is prepared to implement emergency steps as necessary to ensure public safety.

Background on the properties

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| November 1999 | Arcite Inc.(the Hughes) purchases the Polycraft Building. |
| May 2002 | City puts Hughes under order to repair or demolish the Polycraft Building. |
| June 2002 | <p>Hughes applies for a demolition permit.</p> <p>City stipulates that Hughes demolition plan must provide for the protection of the Mitchell and Surratt properties.</p> <p>The Hughes are unable to submit demolition plan stating they are unable to get the cooperation of Mitchell and Surratt.</p> <p>The Hughes sue the City, Mitchell and Sarratt. They seek to force the City to grant a demolition permit after simple notice to Surratt and Mitchell, stating it is unreasonable of the City to require protection for the Mitchell and Surratt properties as a precondition for a demolition permit. The Hughes also seek to have the court declare their rights in the shared wall</p> |
| November 2002 | The Design and Preservation Commission (DPC) grants certificate of appropriateness to Hughes for demolition of the Polycraft Building, a design guideline requirement for a demolition permit downtown. |
| January 2003 | Mitchell and Surratt sue City and claim DPC violated the FOIA by visiting the site. They ask the court to hold invalid any demolition permit granted to the Hughes for the demolition of the Polycraft Building. |
| Sometime during the spring or summer 2003 | Hughes hires Mark Peters, a certified structural engineer to develop a demolition plan for the Polycraft Building. |